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Question of Cyprus

Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 7 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to express my Government's grave disappointment and concern over a press statement issued by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 March 2016, which constitutes yet another example of Turkey's continued provocative and destabilizing attitude vis-à-vis the Republic of Cyprus.

The Republic of Cyprus, exercising its sovereign right, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, has recently called for a third international tender for hydrocarbon exploration in its exclusive economic zone. The tender was published in the *Official Journal of the European Union* on 24 March 2016.

In its press statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey continues to call into question the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus to an exclusive economic zone and its exploration and exploitation.

Turkey's deplorable position, based on an arbitrary interpretation of international treaties and conventions, is totally unfounded and lacks any legal basis. In addition, it constitutes further proof of its continuing refusal to comply with international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984).

It would be redundant to underline once more that the Republic of Cyprus, a State Member of the United Nations, is fully entitled to legitimately exercise all its sovereign rights deriving from international law over both its land and marine territories, including the sovereign rights over its exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, as guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was ratified by the Republic of Cyprus in 1988.

It is also regrettable that Turkey uses as a pretext for its assertions the "protection of the rights of the Turkish Cypriots". The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has repeatedly made it abundantly clear that Cyprus's natural wealth

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belongs to the people of Cyprus — that is to say, to all citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. Following the resolution of the Cyprus problem, all people of the island will reap the benefits of their country's natural resources.

The rights of the Turkish Cypriots will be best served in the framework of a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, which will allow all Cypriots to live in conditions of peace, dignity and prosperity. It is in this way that the exploitation of Cyprus's hydrocarbons will benefit all Cypriots and guarantee a prosperous future for generations to come.

Hence, it is in this direction that Turkey should be concentrating its efforts, adopting a constructive attitude towards a settlement of the Cyprus problem, which will result in the reunification of the country, its people, its economy and its institutions.

It will take several years before any financial benefits materialize from the exploitation of hydrocarbons in Cyprus's exclusive economic zone. It is therefore of utmost importance that the Cyprus problem be solved by then. We remain confident that this can be achieved, if the Turkish side shows the necessary goodwill and contributes positively and in a concrete way, within the agreed basis of the talks, to the negotiations under way in order to reach a solution in a timely manner.

Turkey's fulfilment of all its obligations arising from the Charter of the United Nations and international law is the only mutually beneficial path ahead. It is also the way forward for the island of Cyprus and its people to benefit from its natural wealth. There can be no doubt that it is also the step most conducive to fostering peace and stability in the wider eastern Mediterranean region.

The Government of Cyprus remains determined to uphold and protect its sovereign rights to explore and exploit its natural resources within its exclusive economic zone under international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, using all peaceful means at its disposal.

I therefore wish to reiterate my Government's request to you to convey to Turkey a firm message: that it must conform with international legality and honour its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, respect the sovereignty and sovereign rights of all States Member of the United Nations and contribute in a concrete way to the efforts for a settlement of the Cyprus problem and the promotion of regional peace and stability.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 44 and 79 (a), and of the Security Council and have it published on the website of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, in the next *Law of the Sea Bulletin*.

(*Signed*) Nicholas **Emiliou**